

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES

Date: May 5, 2016

Meeting # 225

Project: National Aquarium

Phase: Discussion

Location: National Aquarium, Inner Harbor

PRESENTATION:

Jonathan Ceci, Landscape Architect with Ayers Saint Gross presented updates to the Master Plan proposal for the National Aquarium Inner Harbor campus. Key interventions include:

- Define edges of the campus through thresholds with strong identity for improved way-finding – signage piers at Pier 4 point of entry and a vertical edge of tall pylons along Pratt Street complemented by a campus-wide network of new signage;
- Create strong arrival spaces immediately beyond the thresholds – repurposed water feature and redesigned plaza at Pier 4 and reconfigured landscape and tree-planting at the north Waterfront Plaza;
- Establish zones with distinct ecological character by transforming the existing bulkhead in order to bring people closer to the water and providing a continuous promenade along Pier 3 for a variety of civic, leisure and educational experiences;
- Introduce a campus-wide material pallet, kinetic green infrastructure for the urban wetlands and a kit of parts approach to the wetlands edge promenade.

Comments from the Panel:

The Panel was supportive of the greater focus in the proposed improvements to the Master Plan and expressed concern of the following:

- Long view from the east towards loading dock – further study and stronger intervention is needed to ensure that the loading dock is properly screened and that it does not interfere with the proposed activity at the adjacent promenade edge. The Panel suggested that the design team reduces the promenade activity in that zone in favor of introducing trees or other vertical elements that organize the space and control the view from all directions.
- Tall pylons along Pratt Street – the scale and intensity of the proposed intervention seems to add to the visual clutter in the area and does not have the proper impact to solve visibility and way-finding issues at the site. The panel suggested that the Pratt Street intervention be concentrated in the vicinity of the entry/drop-off and that it marks the place of arrival more clearly in a manner that is consistent with the overall vision for the campus;
- Arrival sequence at both thresholds – the panel urged the design team to continue to study the arrival at both points of entry, east Pier 4 and north Waterfront Plaza, in order to create adequate forecourt experience that provides clear accommodation to both pedestrian and vehicular movement;
- Scope of project – the panel encouraged the design team to focus the energy of the proposed interventions further at key points of the master plan in order to ensure optimal impact for a limited budget and for an even greater clarity of vision in their fundraising efforts.

Panel Action: Discussion.

Attending: Jonathan Ceci, Adam Ravestein, Sarah Rumbaugh, Joe Kim- Ayers Saint Gross
Kate Brower – BC Rec + Parks
Caroline Peri, Will Dorfman – DPoB
Melody Simmons - BBJ

Messrs. Bowden, Haresign, Burns, Rubin and Ms. Ilieva* - UDARP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Jaleesa Tate, Matthew DeSantis, Wolde Ararsa –
Planning